The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers / L'Association canadienne des professeurs de Langues secondes

CASLT/ACPLS

PRESS RELEASE

Better Conditions are Needed for FSL Educators in Canada

SASKATOON, October 26, 2006 – Gaining access to adequate teaching resources and to increased professional development opportunities, as well as improving public opinion and community support towards French as a second language (FSL) programs are among the most pressing needs of FSL educators in Canada, according to a report recently released by leading teacher associations.

A total of 1305 FSL teachers, from all provinces and territories, presented their perceptions and opinions in this national survey. The study – funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage and jointly conducted by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT), and the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) – is a first of its kind.

The respondents were quite dissatisfied with the resources available to them. Fewer than 50% of respondents considered commercial materials to be adequate, and 80% rated materials presenting Francophone culture as being of poor quality.

Moreover, one of the greatest challenges for FSL teachers is meeting expectations in terms of a high level of proficiency in French, and of experiential, interactive second language teaching approaches. Teachers thus expressed a need for more professional development activities that target areas such as upgrading French language skills and providing information on newer methodologies.

Negative attitudes toward French were also cited as a challenge, with over 80% of the teachers judging the community in which they teach to be unsupportive.

Miles Turnbull, CASLT President, states that the results clearly showcase a need for action. The CASLT thus invites its partners and key stakeholders to attend its annual networking event to be held December 1st, in order to discuss and develop an initial action plan to respond to the findings of the survey.

"FSL teaching must be promoted as a viable career option," says Dr. Turnbull. "There is a need for more programs offering initial teacher training with a focus on second language pedagogy. New teachers also require ongoing support through professional development, information sharing, and opportunities to enrich their language proficiency and cultural competency."

Forty percent of respondents also indicated having considered leaving FSL teaching. Turnbull states that more research into the reasons behind this trend is necessary in order to find better ways to provide support to FSL teachers.

The CASLT has initiated a committee to study and develop a set of guidelines for FSL teacher competence (basic minimum qualifications, including pedagogical training, language proficiency, and subject matter knowledge), to help employers in their selection of new candidates as well as help teacher education programs review and improve existing programs. The CASLT looks forward to continued dialogue on these issues with all stakeholders involved in FSL education across the country.

The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), originally formed in 1970, increases awareness, appreciation and understanding of the importance of second language learning and teaching throughout Canada and promotes the advancement of professional excellence among language educators.

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For more information, please contact:

Nathalie Landry
CASLT Communications Officer (bilingual)
CASLT Head Office – Ottawa, Ontario
613.769-1527 (cellular phone – on site)
613.727.3832 x219 (office in Ottawa)
educ@caslt.org

Spokesperson (CASLT):

Miles Turnbull
CASLT President (bilingual)
Faculty of Education, University of PEI
902.566.0341
mturnbull@upei.ca